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December 14

4th Section of El Sillar Road delivered today

The United States and Bolivia open road to benefit licit producers of Chapare

The Governments of the United States and Bolivia delivered on Thursday, December 14 the last section of a paved road in the zone of El Sillar. This road is crucial for the consolidation of the main road between Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, and was rebuilt thanks to a donation of \$6.5 million by the U.S. Government, disbursed through its Agency for International Development (USAID).

During the inauguration ceremony, U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia Philip Goldberg expressed his desire that this road section, which connects two important Bolivian regions, would open a path towards a better and more dignified future for all.

Ambassador Goldberg stated that revamping the 25-kilometer-long El Sillar section was aimed at promoting the economy of the whole country, including that of the region, since this road is used to transport \$58 million in integrated alternative development products annually, such as bananas. Three million boxes of banana will be exported in 2006. "This figure alone already demonstrates the success of the joint programs of integrated alternative development, as well as the achievements of thousands of families of small Bolivian producers, who have demonstrated to the country and to the whole world that their products can reach the most demanding international markets and compete there successfully," Ambassador Goldberg stated, and added: "This is a joint commitment that has several components. One of those is the development of opportunities for a licit economy; the others are interdiction and the strict control of coca cultivation."

El Sillar is a geologically unstable area. Starting in 2000, the road's flexible asphalt layer completely disintegrated, causing major traffic choke points along several kilometers of the road. The very steep terrain and extreme rain rates frequently caused landslides.

After six years of paving work using experimental technology along this major four-stage project, the El Sillar section was concluded, guaranteeing the free circulation of Chapare-produced alternative development products year round. Licit agricultural products of the region will be able to reach the national and international markets, thus improving the quality of life of farmers involved in integrated alternative development. This road project is part of the support provided by the U.S. Government to Bolivian counternarcotics efforts.



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USAID is the U.S. Government Agency for International Development. Its cooperation programs in Bolivia are directed to improve the effectiveness, responsiveness, and transparency of Bolivian democracy; provide greater

economic opportunities to poor populations through business and trade development; develop healthcare best practices and services; improve the sustainable use of natural resources; and promote social and economic development in order to reduce illicit production of coca.